



US Army Corps
of Engineers
Northwestern Division



NOR'WESTER

WINTER 2013

COMMANDER'S COLUMN



COL Anthony C. Funkhouser
Northwestern Division
Commander

Greetings to the Northwestern Division Family and Friends!

Happy Holidays to the entire Northwestern Division Team.

The NWD team has been pretty busy this first quarter, despite operating under the Continuing Resolution. Our most significant contribution has been the support of recovery efforts linked to Super Storm Sandy. We had 71 personnel deployed to various locations from the front lines along the New York and New Jersey shoreline all the way back to USNORTHCOM headquarters in Colorado. Thanks for the selfless service of our deployees, and thanks to the entire team that picked up their workload at the district and division level while they were deployed. We are also doing a great job supporting our deployed districts in TransAtlantic Division.

I receive many emails from the commanders thanking us for making critical suspenses and making awards. Thanks to everyone working in these projects. We are about mission complete with the first quarter FY13. There has been a lot of work across the board in Civil Works, Military Programs and International and Interagency Support programs. Thanks to all -- from PMs, Engineers, Park Rangers and Contracting Specialists to every team member in between . . . Great Job!

At the Division, we have some key leaders retiring this month and I want to publicly thank them for their many years of service to our Nation, and also for all they have accomplished in support of our districts. Best wishes to Don Kaneshige (RBT/Engineering), Diane Lau (HR), Katie Dooney-Foster (HR), Cathy Dewar (EEO), Bob Willis (PDD), John LaRandeau (Omaha -Nav), and Kathy Jensen (Omaha - WM/RCC) and their families.

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DEPUTY'S CORNER



COL Robert A. Tipton
Deputy Commander

A "Tried and True" Hallmark of Good Organizations

Those who have been with USACE for a long time know that we have worked hard over the years to establish a culture of safety, and that focus on safety has served us well.

The most successful companies in industry generally accept that safety is one of the key performance metrics on how well they are doing. The reverse is also true --those organizations that fail to safeguard their employees and stakeholders always fail in the long run. For example, the nuclear industry was nearly destroyed as result of the Three Mile Island incident and it took the strategic foresight of their leadership to

refocus their efforts around safety.

Several years ago, a representative of the industry spoke at an NWD senior leader conference and talked about this rebuilding period where their focus was solely on safety, the only metric that mattered. Availability, production, budget, etc . . . were all secondary to the safety performance indicators. They were convinced that their focus on safety as the driving metric was the foundation of their recovery as a viable industry.

While we can all be proud that

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The Army recently asked many of you to support the 2012 Federal Employee View Point Survey. The Army had nearly 78,000 responses; USACE about 10,000 responses; and NWD more than 1,600 responses.

I want to share some of the feedback. Statistically, we were on par with Army averages. Under the category of "My Work Experience," NWD personnel like their jobs, have a sense of accomplishment, and understand how their work relates to higher level goals and priorities. However, we have insufficient resources and we are not fulfilling individual training needs.

In the "My Work Unit" category, the majority were satisfied with the overall quality of work and the level of cooperation to get the job done. Employees in NWD do not perceive that awards were tied to performance of their jobs.

In the "My Agency" category, we scored ourselves very high with regard to having the technical skills to do our job, safety in the workplace, and not tolerating prohibited personnel practices. Areas to improve were rewarding creativity and innovation, tying pay raises to performance, with some doubt expressed that we will actually use this survey to improve our workplace.

In the category of "My Supervisor/Team Leader," we scored, for the most part, very positively with leaders balancing work and life issues and leaders listening and treating people with respect. We scored very high on supervisors talking to employees on their performance in the last six months.

In the "Leadership" category, we had positive results on collaboration across the work units and leaders reviewing goals and objectives. We need our leaders to improve on generating motivation and commitment to the workforce and support for Work/Life programs. We also need to improve communication throughout the workforce on projects, goals and needed resources.

Finally, in the category of "My Satisfaction," our workforce reported they were satisfied with their jobs and the organization. However, the workforce also wants to see improvement in the policies and practices of our senior leaders along with opportunities to get a better job within the organization. Based on this feedback, which I greatly appreciate, we will have our Commanders and HR staff work on ways to address your concerns.

As I travel around and participate in Town Halls or visit your projects I look forward to discussing your insights. Bottom line, we are looking to make NWD and USACE a great place to work. I'd like to address one of the survey areas dealing with training. I want to

place emphasis on your personal development and encourage all of you to enroll in the Civilian Education System (CES). For more information on CES, please visit the Army Management Staff College's website at <http://www.amsc.belvoir.army.mil/academic/ces/> or the Army Civilian Training Education or Development System Training Catalog at <http://cpol.army.mil/library/train/catalog/toc.html>;

Finally, thanks to all who participated in the NWD slogan contest. The winning submission was submitted by Allison Young, Maintenance Technician, Dworshak Dam, NWW; but we also had a similar submission by Stephenie Renshaw, E & C, NWW. The motto does a great job of capturing our history from Lewis and Clark's Corps of Discovery to the present moment where we continue to find a path forward to new challenges each and every day. The NWD slogan will be *Preserving the Past, Forging the Future*. I will plan to recognize these individuals in the near future with an NWD coin.

Vr,
Tony

Continued - SAFETY

USACE does have a strong safety culture, we cannot take it for granted. In FY 11 and 12, NWD performed well in the area of safety, but not necessarily to the level we had hoped. In FY 12, we improved significantly in terms of contractor safety, but there is still room for improvement. In terms of our public safety, we had a very challenging year with an increase of public fatalities at our facilities. In FY13, we will be pushing forward on safety initiatives and continual improvement.

Recently, I met with all of the District safety managers to develop our Division Safety Management Action Plan for FY 13 or "SMAP." I am impressed by the quality of our safety professionals, and while their job is to help us focus on the right things, it is up to each one of us to ensure that our programs are safe and mission-effective. I challenge each of you to review the FY 13 SMAP and help with one key area focused on improving leadership and employee involvement in safety.

Probably the most significant thing each of us can do is to be observant and not allow simple safety violations to occur without comment. Too often, we see things that we know may be unsafe, but are not willing to point them out and call attention to the activity, only to later find out that something happened that could have been prevented.

You know an organization is good when you see the most junior person on the jobsite stop an unsafe operation from happening. Good organizations are safe organizations and require diligent daily efforts by all.

NWD wins again in Chief of Engineers Awards program

NWD walked away with three prestigious Design Awards in the 2012 Chief of Engineers Awards of Excellence Program. The program recognizes some of the most innovative projects in the world with the 70 nominations submitted judged by an independent jury of design and environmental professionals. New this year is the Sustainability Hero Award to recognize an individual with outstanding leadership in sustainable practices and energy and environmental management.

SUSTAINABILITY HERO AWARD

Sven Lie, Chief of Electrical/Mechanical Design in Seattle District .

DESIGN MERIT AWARD:

Building 465 Renovation (Fort Leavenworth, KS)
Academic facility to support extensive classroom use; equipped with latest technology; historical renovation
Design District: Kansas City District (\$16 million)

DESIGN MERIT AWARD;

Lower Snake & Columbia Rivers Extended Navigation
Outage for major repairs (\$67 million/16 wk. timeframe)
Design Districts: Portland and Walla Walla districts.

Ask Jim:

New Year's Resolutions



Dr. James Hearn, SES
Regional Business Directorate

January 1, 2013 is another opportunity to adopt life changing scenarios, make minor adjustments to good habits, or wring our hands over the many things we need to change – all of which are usually toast by January 10th.

We may focus on eating better, exercising more, reading good books, or getting that long planned degree. My suggestion here is to resolve to dust off your long shelved career plans and see if they are still valid or did they go the way of bell-bottoms and lava lamps.

With a significant part of the Federal Government workforce retirement eligible, career opportunities may open faster than our plans predicted. If one of these great opportunities arises, are you ready to take advantage of “luck?”

Those of you who have attended my “brown bag presentations” on career development, you heard me describe doing a personal SWOT analysis. SWOT is a term usually found in strategic planning where an organization evaluates its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). Being brutally honest in our evaluation is critical to a good SWOT analysis. If we dismiss a weakness, it may be the one thing that has been holding us back from career advancement. If we can identify the deficiencies or gaps, we can fix them.

Start your SWOT analysis with your strengths. These are points to emphasize on your resume or in interviews. It may be your technical skills, education, and diversity of experience or other positive traits. Weaknesses are harder to address because we don’t like to think about them. However, these are the ones that can give us the most advantage if we fix them.

A lack of a graduate degree, supervisory experience, breath of jobs or not being well known are all limiting areas seen in many resumes. Look at emerging opportunities. Identifying fields that are growing and skills that are in demand give you a blueprint for a possible career move. What threats are facing your organization, location or career field? Is work drying up or a long running project being completed? Mobility may be critical here if overall work is on the decline.

Finally, if you have not updated/reviewed your resume in 6-months – just do it! With a good SWOT analysis, you can chart a career path that will achieve your 5-10-15-20 year career goals. Without a plan, you are like Alice in Wonderland.

Alice told the Cheshire Cat that she was lost, and he asked, “Where do you want to go?” She said, “I don’t know.”

The Cheshire Cat replied, “Then any road will take you there.”